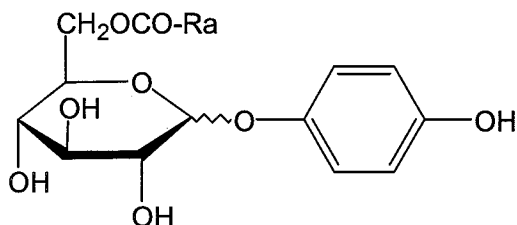


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. **(Currently amended)** An arbutin ester compound represented by formula (1):

Formula (1)



wherein Ra is selected from the group consisting of:

$R_1\text{-CH=CH}_2$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

$R_1\text{-C(CH}_3\text{)=CH}_2$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

$R_1\text{-COOCH=CH}_2$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

$R_1\text{-COOH}$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

$R_1\text{-COO-R}_2$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and R_2 is an alkyl group or an aryl group; and

~~$R_1\text{-[R}_3\text{-CH=CH-R}_4\text{]}_X\text{-R}_5\text{-CH}_3$, wherein R_1 , R_3 , R_4 and R_5 are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6;~~

$R_1\text{-C(CH}_3\text{)}_3$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and

~~$R_1\text{-CH}_3$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.~~

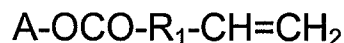
2.-10. **(Canceled)**

11. **(Previously presented):** A composition that inhibits tyrosinase comprising, as an active ingredient, at least one of the arbutin ester compounds according to claim 1.

12. **(Previously presented):** An external preparation for the skin, comprising the composition according to claim 11.

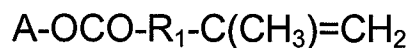
13. (Currently amended): A process for producing an arbutin ester compound, comprising the step of carrying out an esterification reaction of arbutin with a carboxylic acid compound represented by one of formulae (11) to (17) ~~or formula (19)~~:

Formula (11)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

Formula (12)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (13)



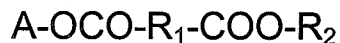
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (14)



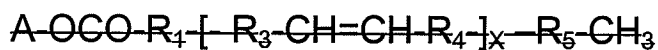
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (15)



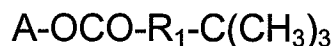
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and R₂ is an alkyl group or an aryl group;

Formula (16)



~~wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R₁ is a single bond or an arylene group and R₃, R₄ and R₅ are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6;~~

Formula (17)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (19)



~~wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.~~

14. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of an enzyme catalyst.

15. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of a chemical catalyst.

16. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out while performing a dehydration treatment.

17. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification reaction step is followed by the steps of:

extracting and isolating unreacted carboxylic acid derivative(s) from the esterification reaction mixture with a nonpolar organic solvent; and subsequently,

adding excess water to extract and isolate unreacted arbutin and to precipitate the arbutin ester compound.

18-36. **(Canceled)**

37. **(Previously presented)** The composition according to Claim 11, further comprising a suitable carrier.